

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-14

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H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
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DRAFTED BY ARA:ECA:JNBUMPUS:NG
APPROVED BY ARA:FJMCNEIL
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-----039840 152139Z /62

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 097542

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, AR

SUBJECT: REPRESENTATIONS TO ARGENTINE AMBASSADOR ON DEATHS
AND DISAPPEARANCES

REF: BUENOS AIRES 2663

1. DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY MCNEIL CALLED IN ARGENTINE
AMBASSADOR AJA ESPIL ON APRIL 11 TO BACK UP AMBASSADOR
CASTRO'S REPRESENTATIONS TO PRESIDENT VIDELA ABOUT THE
REPORT OF THE MURDER OF THE TWO FRENCH NUNS AND FIVE QUOTE
MOTHERS OF THE PLAZA UNQUOTE.

2. MCNEIL NOTED WE HAD GREAT RESPECT FOR PRESIDENT VIDELA,
RECOGNIZED THE ARGENTINE SITUATION WAS DIFFICULT, AND ACK-
NOWLEDGED POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ARGENTINE HUMAN
RIGHTS SITUATION BY MOVING FROM A NEGATIVE POSITION TO A
POSITION OF ABSTENTION IN THE IFIS. NOW HOWEVER WE WERE
FACED WITH CREDIBLE REPORTS THAT TWO NUNS AND FIVE OTHER
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WOMEN HAD BEEN MURDERED WITH THE PRESUMPTION THAT THE OTHER
WOMEN HAD BEEN MURDERED. WE COULD ONLY BE PROFOUNDLY CON-
CERNED BY THIS OUTRAGE, WHICH SEEMED TRACEABLE TO OUT OF
CONTROL SECURITY ELEMENTS.

3. AJA ESPIL PUT UP MINIMAL RESISTANCE TO REPORTS OF THE
DEATH OF THE NUNS AND THE MOTHERS, STATING THAT IT WOULD BE

A "MIRACLE" IF THEY SHOULD APPEAR. AJA ADMITTED THAT THERE WERE EXCESSES IN ARGENTINA, BUT ASKED FOR UNDERSTANDING AND PATIENCE. HE EMPHASIZED THAT ALTHOUGH KIDNAPPINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES CONTINUED, THEY WERE FAR LESS FREQUENT THAN IN THE PAST.

4. MCNEIL RAISED THE PETROUCH AND DEGHI DISAPPEARANCES, WHICH AJA HAD NOT HEARD ABOUT, AS WELL AS THE REPORTED DEATHS OF THE FOUR PRISONERS RELEASED FROM LA PLATA PRISON. FOLLOWING THE INSTRUCTIONS IN STATE 089468, HE POINTED OUT THAT THE MURDERS OF THE NUNS AND THE CONTINUING CREDIBLE REPORTS OF DISAPPEARANCES HAD CAST A PALL OVER OUR EARLIER OPTIMISM THAT THINGS WERE GETTING BETTER IN ARGENTINA. HE PARTICULARLY STRESSED THE NEED FOR FURTHER POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS TO OFFSET THESE TRAGIC EVENTS. HE POINTED OUT THAT THESE EVENTS MADE IT QUITE DIFFICULT FOR THE U.S. TO GO AHEAD WITH THINGS LIKE SPARES AND TRAINING FOR THE ARGENTINES. IN PARTICULAR, SOMETHING MUST BE DONE TO END THE DISAPPEARANCES IF RELATIONS ARE TO IMPROVE.

5. AJA ESPIL, ATTEMPTING TO MITIGATE SOMEWHAT THE NEGATIVE INFORMATION BEING PRESENTED, SHOWED MCNEIL A CABLE FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTRY WHICH SAID THAT JACOBO TIMERMAN WOULD SOON BE RELEASED. (AJA, HIMSELF, BASED ON THE DEGHI CASE, EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT TIMERMAN'S SAFETY IF HE WERE RELEASED BUT REQUIRED TO STAY FOR AWHILE IN ARGENTINA AS

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NOW PLANNED.) HE INSISTED THE RECORD OF RECENT MONTHS, DESPITE SETBACKS, HAD IMPROVED SIGNIFICANTLY. AJA REMARKED HE HAD A REAL PROBLEM IN PRESENTING THE ISSUE TO HIS GOVERNMENT. THE REACTION COULD BE STRONG, HE IMPLIED, IF U.S. POSITION HARDENED BECAUSE OF DISAPPEARANCES, SOME OF WHICH WERE SEVERAL MONTHS OLD, JUST AT TIME TIMERMAN WAS FINALLY RELEASED. ZIMMERMANN POINTED OUT WE HAD SIMILAR PROBLEMS IN THAT WHILE WE WILL APPLAUD THE RELEASE OF TIMERMAN, OTHERS CONTINUE TO DISAPPEAR. MCNEIL SAID HE OF COURSE WAS ENCOURAGED ABOUT THIS OFFICIAL NOTIFICATION OF THE GOA'S INTENT TO FREE TIMERMAN, BUT STRESSED HOW TRULY HARMFUL ANY PHYSICAL ATTACKS ON HIM WOULD BE FOR OUR RELATIONS, AND URGED THAT HE BE ALLOWED TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY UNDER THESE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

6. THE CONVERSATION CLOSED ON A REQUEST BY AJA FOR U.S. GOVERNMENT INFORMATION ON CURRENT DISAPPEARANCES. HE PROMISED TO RELAY THIS NEWS BACK TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY AND EXPLAINED THAT THIS WOULD HELP TO MAKE THE ARGENTINE BUREAUCRATS UNDERSTAND THE SERIOUSNESS WHICH WE ATTACH TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTION. WE PROMISED TO DO SO.

7. IN YOUR DISCUSSIONS WITH VIDELA AND OTHER SENIOR ARGENTINE LEADERS, PARTICULAR STRESS SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE NEED FOR FURTHER POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS AND THE NEED TO END DISAPPEARANCES CAUSED BY OUT OF CONTROL SECURITY ELEMENTS. THE EMBASSY SHOULD ALSO STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF ASSURING THE SAFETY OF TIMERMAN, ONCE RELEASED.

CHRISTOPHER

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NNN

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